



The River's Edge

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Important Dates

January 4

- ASSET Testing 8:00 a.m., Continuing Ed. Bldg., Pocahontas

January 5

- ASSET Testing 5:00 p.m., Continuing Ed. Bldg., Pocahontas

January 6

- Board of Trustees Meeting

January 10

- Spring Semester Begins

January 14

- BRTC Foundation Board Meeting

150 December Graduates Honored



BRTC President Richard Gaines conferred degrees on approximately 150 students who are December graduates of BRTC's associate and certificate degree programs in commencement exercises Thursday, December 16. The ceremony was held at Randolph County Develop-

ment Center. State Senator Paul Miller of Melbourne delivered the commencement speech for the event, which attracted a large crowd of family and friends of the graduates.

The graduates included some 34 completing the Associate of Arts (college transfer) degree; 56 completing various Associate of Applied Science degrees, and the balance receiving one-year certificates or certificates of proficiency. Several graduates received departmental

awards. Recognition was also given those students who are members of Phi Theta Kappa, national honor society, and those whose GPAs place them on the President's and Dean's lists.

Class spokesperson Julia Dawn Witt of Imboden urged fellow graduates to remember "What we are is God's gift to us; what we become is our gift to God."

Senator Miller spoke of the breathtaking pace of change as a result of technology, and he urged the members of the graduating class to continue to learn and to be active, contributing members of their communities.

Students Now Have "Extra Incentive" to Graduate from BRTC

Students attending Black River Technical College at Pocahontas and Paragould now have an extra special incentive to complete their degrees, thanks to the "wild idea" and generosity of a Walnut Ridge business executive. Steve Manley, CEO of Universal Asset Management, Inc., has announced to the college he will give a new car annually to some lucky graduate, selected in a random drawing following the spring graduation. The gift is to be given in honor of all the employees at UAM at the Walnut Ridge Air Base, most of whom are graduates of BRTC's Aviation program. Universal Asset Management is a firm which disassembles airliners and sells the com-

ponents to airlines and repair facilities.

Manley was on hand Friday for the formal announcement of the award," dubbed by the college as "The River's End Incentive Award," and brought with him the 2005

Pontiac Neptune blue five-passenger auto, which will be given through the BRTC Founda-

tion to an eligible graduate from the December or May graduating class.

The idea, Manley said, occurred to him after visiting the BRTC campus as a part of "Project: Finish." This program, coordinated by

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Steve Manley Presents Key to President Richard Gaines

Online Classes Provide Many Options at BRTC

Many people are interested in earning a college degree or certificate but do not have the time after work or family obligations to attend day or night classes at college. Other students do not want to drive the long distance from their home to college to take classes. For these people, BRTC has a great option: distance education.

Karen Liebhaber, Distance Education Coordinator at BRTC, points out that traditionally, education has taken place in the classroom: the teacher at the front of the room, the students in rows facing him. Today, though, the face of education is drastically different. Students are now able to sit in front of their computers at home and interact with their course materials, classmates, and instructors. These electronic classes are part of the distance education (DE) delivery method available to students at BRTC.

Distance delivery is just that, Liebhaber explained: classes delivered to students over a distance. At BRTC, students have the option of

taking classes provided by computers. Online classes at BRTC utilize a software system called Blackboard. Using a personal username and password, students access their class over Blackboard any time from any location in the world, provided that students use a computer with internet connection. Class materials such as lecture notes and Power-Point presentations are available online for students.

Students interact with both their instructors and classmates via electronic discussion forums. Assignments are submitted electronically through Blackboard, and students access their most recent grades at any time of the day or night.

BRTC offers many types of

classes via distance education, according to Liebhaber. These include business, history, government, psychology, anthropology, dietetics, English, and math. In addition, the fire science department is working

on online and hybrid classes, she added.

"The majority of classes offered via DE at BRTC are classes that will transfer to ASU and other four-year colleges. These classes also count

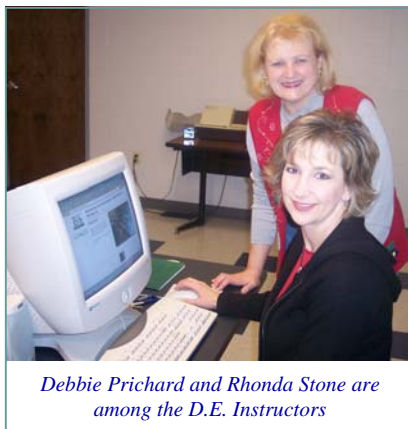
toward the Associate of Arts degree, Associate of Applied Science degrees, and several business and technical certificates," Liebhaber noted.

She also pointed out that students who are not quite ready for a full online class but need some flexibility can take a hybrid class. Hybrid

classes offer 50% of the class material online. "In these classes," explained Liebhaber, "instead of meeting on-campus two times per week like traditional classes, students meet only once per week. The balance of instruction is delivered via computer. Exams are taken on-campus like normal, providing that familiarity for hybrid students."

DE students must have daily access to the internet, an active e-mail account, a recent version of an Internet browser such as Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer, and basic computer skills including a working knowledge of e-mail, the ability to navigate around the internet, good typing skills, and minimal knowledge of basic word processing systems. For some classes, additional skills are needed.

For more information, visit the distance education website at <http://de.blackrivertech.org> or contact Karen Liebhaber, Distance Education Coordinator, via e-mail at karenl@blackrivertech.org or via phone at (870) 248-4178.



Debbie Prichard and Rhonda Stone are among the D.E. Instructors

BRTC's Kimbrough Chorus in Premiere Concert

A large and enthusiastic audience attended the first formal concert by the BRTC Kimbrough Chorus December 12 in Randolph County Development Center. The Chorus was formed at the beginning of the fall semester as a result of a monetary gift to the college from retired Pocahontas businessman Dexter Kimbrough, and is under the direction of Joniece Trammel.

The chorus, composed of 19 singers from the college and community, was accompanied on several pieces by students in the Pocahontas High School Band. They included Erin Young, flute, and percussionists Trent Duff, Cody Ivy and Adam Weiss.

The concert featured a number

of Christmas selections, including traditional favorites and music with an international flavor from such places as Kenya and Jamaica.

In addition, special performances included a duet by students Bri Baker and Lynae Russell, a solo violin performance by student Alisha Jones, solo performances by community vocalists John Dalton and Brent Powell, a quartet performance by Powell, Kimbrough, Dalton and Trammel, and a solo selection by student David Wessell.

Interested persons may sign up for the chorus in the spring semester, either as credit or audit students. The chorus meets Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 10:45. Interested individuals may contact Tram-

mel at 248-4000 Ext. 4157 for more

information.



Kimbrough Chorus Presents Christmas Concert

**Classes Begin January 10
Registration Now in Progress**

Diverse Group of Students Shares Stories

Diversity is an appropriate description of Gary Buxton's Creative Writing class. "Never before have I had such a diverse group of students in one class," noted the instructor of English at BRTC. From the young traditional student, to the 90-year-old nursing home resident, from the disabled and handicapped, to a state representative, and a mixture in between, twelve unique individuals gather in one class for primarily the same purpose – to learn how to express themselves through writing.

Most of the students share Buxton's sentiment that "everyone has a story to tell." Wanting to share those stories, whether about personal feelings, life experiences, or area history and culture, was the basic inspiration behind students signing up for this particular class. They wanted to put those stories on paper.

Aside from learning how to put thoughts in writing, another benefit of the Creative Writing class with the

diversity of students is being able to experience life from different perspectives. "A plus (from the class) was my making friends, and finding life is indeed funny from all angles," said student Nora Cummins.

Another student, 80-plus-year-old Shirley Chester, added that "this is a group of young people and elder people enjoying time together and knowing where they stand, but willing to move forward when considering better views of others. I appreciate the young people much more by hearing their hearts and I love it."

A couple of students mentioned that they would like to put their memories in writing to pass along to their children and grandchildren. One reason given by Susan Chester Seawel for taking the class was that she was interested in the structure the class would give her to write a collection of memories from her childhood and professional career. Because a debilitating disease prevents

her from doing any extensive writing, she hired a person to take dictation for her at the beginning of the semester, and "my mouth hasn't stopped moving." So far, she has written over 30 chapters "thanks to the encouragement of the class and Mr. Buxton." Her husband and classmate, State Representative Harmon Seawel, who took the class

for help in writing about Randolph County's history and culture, also commented that he "appreciates the class's value in providing therapy and involvement for my wife."

As the students will contest, there is much more to gain from the Creative Writing class than learning how to express themselves through writing.



BRTC Creative Writing Class

Students

Perkins Recruiter Joniece Trammel, involved Manley and other employers serving as guest speakers to instill in students the importance of finishing their degree programs. "I just wanted to find some way that might give students a little extra encouragement or incentive to graduate, and I thought this might help, Manley said." He also indicated he has been impressed by the skills and strong work ethic of the graduates of BRTC's Aircraft Airframe and Power Plant Aviation program, which he has credited on numerous occasions as one of the key reasons for the decision to locate the company in Walnut Ridge. BRTC President Richard Gaines expressed his elation at the plan. "Not only is this great news for the student who will eventually receive the car, but it is a very positive move also to focus attention on the importance of earning the degree. All higher education institutions are seeking ways to in-

(continued from page 1)

crease their graduation rates. We know that Arkansas needs more people with college degrees if it is to compete economically, and we know that a degree does add tremendously to an individual's potential earning power. And so we welcome such initiatives as this one which may just spark some of our students to keep on persevering and not give up until they have finished their program of study."

Gaines said this program, as far as he is aware, is unique in all of Arkansas and possibly beyond. He praised Manley's imaginative approach, and thanked him for his commitment to the people of Northeast Arkansas.

Students who graduate from one of BRTC's two-year associate degree or one-year certificate programs in either December or May will be eligible to be in the drawing if they have completed at least 75 percent of their coursework at BRTC, if they are

Head Start Children Receive Ornaments

Members of the local P.E.O. Chapter made and presented wreaths decorated with children's Christmas ornaments to the Pocahontas Head Start Child Development Center on the campus of Black River Technical College. P.E.O. is a woman's philanthropic educational organization. Each of the 120 children being served there will receive one ornament and also a candy cane to take home, compliments of P.E.O.

Making the presentation were P.E.O. members Sharleen Creech and Sharon Pitts. Accepting the ornaments and candy canes were Center Director Judy Swann and a group of the children.

The Black River Head Start Center serves children ages three to five. One of the classrooms is designated for children and grandchildren of BRTC students (first priority) and staff. For more information, contact Judy Swann at 892-5112.

completing their first higher education degree, and if they meet certain financial qualifications as determined by federal financial aid guidelines. Vice President for Student Services Dr. Michael Sullens estimated that upwards of 75 percent of BRTC's graduates will meet these criteria and thus be eligible.



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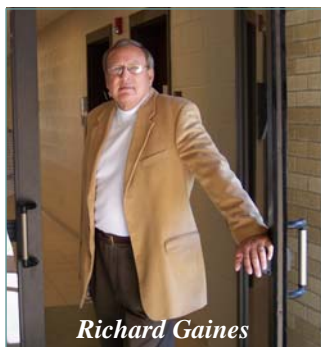
Mission Statement

Black River Technical College is an institution of higher learning committed to a partnership with the individual and the global community to provide lifelong learning experiences, seeking always to empower those it serves to achieve their academic, vocational, and personal development goals.

On-line Application address:

<http://connect.blackrivertech.org/nappadm.html>

From the President's Desk



Richard Gaines

BRTC is honored and appreciative of the decision by a business executive to offer a special graduation incentive to our students. Steve Manley, CEO of Universal Asset Management, Inc., of Memphis, has announced his company will provide a new automobile annually to one of our graduates. The winning student will be selected by a drawing that includes the year's graduates, some 75 percent or more of whom we estimate will meet eligibility requirements developed by the donor. His motivation - simply to give added encouragement and incentive to

students to complete their programs of study and receive their one-year or two-year degrees. The recipient may be someone who has completed a college transfer Associate of Arts degree, or an Associate of Applied Science degree or one-year Certificate in our many career options.

The award, "The River's End Incentive Award," is to be given in honor of employees at UAM's plant located in Walnut Ridge where workers, most of whom are BRTC's aviation graduates, disassemble airliners so the components can be sold to airlines and repair facilities.

When he announced the award to the enthusiastic reception of faculty and staff at our end-of-semester potluck last week, Manley spoke of the high level of skills and good work ethic BRTC students and graduates have demonstrated. He also spoke highly of our Aviation instructor and of the quality of that program and its impact on his deciding to locate the firm's disassembly

plant at Walnut Ridge.

Frankly, we are delighted with his announcement. It is very possible that students who are struggling in some way may actually gain just a little boost to persevere with their studies as a result of the potential for winning a new car. It is also possible that prospective students may take a longer look at BRTC and its associate and certificate degree programs because of the added publicity and, again, that potential of being the lucky winner.

Of course, the new car award itself is not as important as the desired outcome: completing a degree. That is at the heart of the award. But if this program makes people think about and helps create excitement about the prospect of finishing their studies and *maybe* winning a car, as we hope it will, then "The River's End" will prove to have been a unique and visionary idea. From all of us at BRTC, thank you, Steve Manley.



Waterloo Donation

Automotive Service Technology instructor Travis DeClerk is pictured here with ten large rollaway toolboxes donated to his program by Waterloo Industries. The boxes are valued at \$6,000-\$7,000. DeClerk expressed his appreciation to the local industry for their generous donation.



Steve Manley Talks About Incentive During BRTC Employee Potluck.